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HENRY WALTON

1746 - 1813

H. BLAIRMAN & SONS LTD.

16, GRAFTON STREET, W.1.

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NEW YORK :
20, East 55th Street.

JULY 4th - 25th.

CATALOGUES 2/6. The entire proceeds will be given to the Artists' General Benevolent Institution.

We are greatly indebted to Sir Osbert Sitwell Bart. for his happy suggestion that a small exhibition of 'genre' pictures by Henry Walton should be arranged in an intimate atmosphere of a furnished room.

In arranging this collection we have endeavoured to place each picture above a specimen piece of furniture in compliment to it.

May we take this opportunity of expressing our sincere thanks to the owners who have so willingly entrusted their pictures to our care ; also to Sir Robert Witt, Sir Philip Hendy and the Curators of the Museums in East Anglia who have kindly helped us to trace these pictures and their owners.

HENRY WALTON

Until the Rev. Edmund Farrer and Mr. W. T. Whitley made their respective researches into his life, little was known of Henry Walton, and even today some elements of contradiction linger, even about such elemental facts as the dates of his birth and death. In summary, however, and clearing away the debris that has collected, the story is soon told.

This most pleasing and exquisite painter, like so many remarkable English artists, came from East Anglia. He was born at Dickleburgh near Diss in Norfolk, in 1746, and was brought up and lived in easy circumstances, his great-uncle being the famous admiral, Sir George Walton.

As a boy of fifteen, he evinced so marked a talent for painting that various friends were induced to place him with Zoffany in London. After quitting the studio of that painter and setting up on his own, he married a neighbour, Miss Rust, who was also a painter and miniaturist, and soon after purchased a freehold estate, the Oak Tree Farm at Burgate in Suffolk.

Here he lived and worked for many years, though he also travelled much and worked regularly and at frequent intervals in London. He exhibited for a few years at the Royal Academy, but in 1778 he failed to become an Associate Member of that body, and this greatly disappointed and offended him.

As well as being a painter of note, he obtained an unusually high reputation as connoisseur and expert. It was said that hardly a picture of any note existed in England with which he was not acquainted.

He helped to form several famous contemporary collections, among them it is supposed, that of Lord Fitzwilliam, now the nucleus of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. The first Lord Lansdowne was reputed never to buy a picture without Walton's advice, and he was one of the six judges called on to decide the validity of certain paintings that had passed from the gallery of Lord Radstock into that of Lord Lansdowne.

Walton also gave expert evidence in the celebrated case of *Desenfans v. Vandergucht*; a lawsuit that concerned the authenticity of a large painting, *La Vierge Aux Enfants* which Desenfans, a well-known dealer had purchased on the guarantee of Vandergucht that it was by the hand of Nicolas Poussin.

Henry Walton was a friend of most of the English artists of his day, and it is probable that, since he was a friend of Gainsborough and was known to cherish a great admiration for that painter's work, he was the same Walton who purchased the contents of Gainsborough's studio after his death.

Walton was a man whose company was much sought after because of his pleasant disposition—a fact to be deduced from his paintings—his high spirits, and his amusing anecdotal conversation.

His nature was sociable, and he died on his way back from a party on the 19th of May, 1813, in New Bond Street, not far from this gallery ; where, nearly a hundred and forty years after his death, the first one-man show of his work is being held.

For the most striking fact about his life has been held until the last : that prolific as he was, and not always successful, yet proves himself in his best work a superb painter. His friend Dawson Turner, the Yarmouth antiquary, described him as a painter of portraits, of ' slight, sketchy landscapes ' and of ' some fancy pieces.'

It is a few of these *fancy pieces*, mostly painted between 1772 and 1780, and full of a personal vision, in spite of their deceptive clarity and apparent objectiveness, that I have tried to bring together here in surroundings and among furniture that harmonize with them.

In addition to their very individual style, they offer us, too, the singular, typical but elusive emanations of the London of their day, and afford an entertaining commentary on the life of the city before the coming of the Industrial Age.

It has been said that certain of Walton's paintings have at times been confused with those of Chardin : and assuredly there is to be found in some of them—in, for example, the *Girl Plucking a Turkey* in the National Gallery—the same qualities often to be noticed in the limpid, logical, elegant works of the French painter, so eminently an artist of the rational century.

And we may note, too, that Walton often visited Paris in pursuit of his studies. Yet had he been a French artist, his name would have been familiar to all art-lovers, instead of surviving, as it has, merely as the painter of certain works which obtained celebrity through the popular engravings of them.

Catalogue

1 THE BALLAD SELLER

Compare No. 4, same subject loaned by Sir Osbert Sitwell Bart.

Engraved by J. Walker and F. Bartolozzi under the title of
"The Young Maid and Old Sailor" 1785, with
verses below commencing "Phillis, fair maid her
curious fancy feeds" and ending "now sells the
ballad and sweeps clean the way."

Loaned by The Executors of the late Lord Mildmay of Flete.

2 THE CHERRY BARROW

Exhibited at Burlington House, 1899

Exhibited at Wembley Exhibition, 1924

Exhibited at Sir Philip Sassoon's collection of Conversation Pieces 1930

This picture is engraved by J. R. Smith under the title of "The
Fruit Barrow"

According to Bromley the children in the picture represent the
artist's children. However, reference to Brande's
catalogue mentions that the young lady is Miss
Carr "and very charming she is," the boys the
nephews and the little girl the niece of Walton

This picture was purchased from the artist by Francis Hurt
Sitwell of Renishaw, the great-great-grandfather
of the present owner.

Loaned by Sir Osbert Sitwell, Bart.

GIRL

3 BARN STORM

Loaned by Philip Frere Esq.

4 THE BALLAD SELLER

An interesting comparison with the finer version of the same
subject loaned by the Executors of the late
Lord Mildmay of Flete

Loaned by Sir Osbert Sitwell Bart.

5 CONVERSATION PIECE

Sir Robert and Lady Buxton with their daughter Anne, dated
1786

Inscribed on the back ' painted by H. Walton '

This picture is described in " Portraits in Norfolk Houses " by
Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, Vol. II, p. 417,
No. 35.

Loaned by Mrs. Buxton

6 THE SILVER AGE

This picture is engraved and published by J. R. Smith 1778

The companion picture to " The Golden Age "

Loaned by Leslie Godden Esq.

7

THE FISH GIRL

Loaned by H. Rothbarth Esq.

8

THREE YOUNG MEN WITH A BOAT
ALONGSIDE BANK OF RIVER WAVENEY

Loaned by Mrs. Woodhill

There is a label on the back of this picture which states that the three men in the boat are William Crowfoot, a surgeon in Beccles and an ancestor of the former owner, with two colleagues named Burroughs of Long Stratton, which is a village in Norfolk about fifteen miles west of Beccles.

9

THE HOLY FAMILY

Loaned by Sir Osbert Sitwell Bart.

The placard which Esack Basha is displaying reads as follows :—

“ To all charitable Gentlemen and Ladies, whom the Lord bless.

The Humble Petition of Esack Basha, Mercht. from Bender, in Turkey, sheweth that when Bender was taken by the Russians from the Turks in the late War, your Petitioner lost all his Merchandizes and Property he had in the world, and his wife, four daughters and two sons were put to the sword, and your Petitioner, with his two remaining sons, with the greatest difficulty escaped to Dantzick, where your said Petitioner lost his two said sons, and being informed they had shipped themselves for London, where your said Petitioner followed them in hopes to find them with the most diligent search and cannot hear anything of them ; whereby your humble Petitioner is reduced to the greatest Distress and Poverty and is not able to return (several words illegible) be pleased to enable a poor Turk, aged 80 years, who has suffered two years of slavery and to-day is past all (word illegible) and is almost starving, be pleased to take (several words illegible) and out of that humanity for which the English Nation is so universally characterised most humbly begs all Charitable and Noble hearts to extend their worthy charity towards him and as in Duty will ever pray for all his worthy Benefactors and this worthy and Noble Nation.”

Bender (called Bendery in some modern maps) is on the Dniester in Bessarabia, and its siege by the Russians (it was then in Turkish territory) took place in 1770. It lasted for two months and when the town was finally taken on September 27, two-thirds of the population perished and the losses of the Russians were so enormous that Catherine the Great is said to have admonished her general, Count Panin, that it were better not to have taken such a town than to win it at such a price.

Loaned by George Kidston Esq., C.M.G.



